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EASTERN EUROPEAN INTELLIGENCER

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Hungarian Central Committee Meets

A meeting of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party's Central Committee was convened on 8 February. The Hungarian News Agency (MTI) cited the topics of discussion as "current domestic and foreign political questions. No expiration date for the meeting was given.

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COMMENT: The principal topics of the Central Committee's discussion will probably be the recent Kadar-Dubcek meeting and the latest developments concerning the Budapest Conference which begins in two weeks.

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Polish Deputy Foreign Minister Home From Paris

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Deputy Foreign Minister Josef Winiewicz returned to Warsaw on 7 February after "several days" in Paris.

COMMENT: No reason has been reported for this previously unannounced visit. Although Winiewicz reportedly was stripped of responsibilities for Western affairs within the Foreign Ministry last summer, it cannot be ruled out that his quiet visit to Paris was connected with a possible forthcoming West German initiative on the Oder-Neisse question.

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Bonn-Prague Trade Treaty and Exchange of Missions Accord Signed

An exchange of letters ratifying the West German-Czecho-slovak commercial treaty and exchange of trade missions took place in Bonn on 7 February. Both accords, initialled last August, will become effective on 15 February. The same day, the West German trade mission chief, Otto Heipertz, will leave for Prague to join an advance party which has already been negotiating for suitable office space and living quarters there.

In addition to reporting the ratification, the Czech press on 8 February published an interview with the Czech

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trade mission chief in Frankfurt, Dr. Novy, who confirmed that the missions will have semi-diplomatic status, including diplomatic immunity for their personnel and privileged communications. The Czech trade mission will have visa-issuing authority except for West Berlin, which will continue to be serviced by the Czechoslovak military mission there. Although Novy said that further "normalization" of relations will depend on the position of the FRG, a separate Czech press report stated that the current accords are an important step toward normalized relations.

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COMMENT: Thus, little more than a month after party boss Novotny's ouster, the Czechs have established the same semi-diplomatic relationship vis-a-vis West Germany as enjoyed by Poland, Hungary and Bulgaria. The USSR, Rumania, and Yugoslavia have full diplomatic relations with Bonn. It is clear that both Bonn and Prague would like to move now toward the establishment of full relations, causing considerable concern to the East Germans and Poles especially.

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Finnish Defense Minister Visits Poland

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Finnish Defense Minister Sulo Suorttanen arrived in Poland on 8 February at the invitation of Defense Minister Spychalski.

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COMMENT: Suorttanen's visit is in return for that of Spychalski to Finland last November. These exchanges reflect Poland's efforts to maintain at least pro forma military ties with some leading European neutrals. Similar exchanges were made in past years with Austria and Switzerland.

Yugoslavia Moves Toward Confederation

Premier Mika Spiljak revealed Belgrade's determination to grant increased authority and responsibility to the various republic governments, during a 23 January discussion with US ambassador Elbrick. Spiljak noted that a commission has been appointed to review the constitutional provisions dealing with this matter and to make recommendations for changes and new legislation.

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COMMENT: Increased republic autonomy is an aim of the regime's reform program, but some of the demands by the republics in this area have created friction with Belgrade. The most recent dispute stems from the Federal government's resolution to establish a ceiling on tax contribution rates by the various republics. Croatia and Slovenia find this particularly offensive, and flatly deny the central government's authority in such matters.

Writer's Trial Opens in Warsaw

Janusz Szpotanski, 34-year old author of an unperformed satirical operetta, went on trial in Warsaw on 5 February. He is accused of producing writing "harmful to good morals." The trial will probably last several weeks.

COMMENT: Szpotanski himself is an undistinguished writer and musician, and his operetta, replete with anti-regime symbolism, reportedly is not a work of the first order. His trial, which according to previous reports had been under preparation for six months, is another example of the regime's heightened sensitivity to all forms of dissent, especially among the intellectuals. Although of minor importance in itself, the trial comes at a time when always present friction between the regime and the cultural milieu has increased in the wake of student demonstrations which followed the recent closing of a controversial play in Warsaw

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